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those funds under the guidance of the SERC, the State Emergency Response Commission, and the guidelines established for doing that. These are all volunteers. They are composed of volunteer firefighters. They are community business representatives, members of the media, members of the county and county officials. They are all local individuals working together to create a local plan that is then coordinated statewide. As they do that, as they expend some of their funds, they can apply for HMEP federal reimbursement funds. Those reimbursement funds only come in, however, once they have expended money, and when they have no budget, there is nothing to expend. So we've gotten in a kind of Catch-22 in the past where although there were some federal monies available, they really didn't have money to spend and then couldn't apply to be reimbursed. If they were able to use a bud...a county budget or other county monies and spent those and then applied for the grant money, that grant money reimbursement, instead of going back to the LEPCs went into the general county funds. Therefore, they still didn't have those monies available. So this is a funding mechanism to be able to get the LEPCs more active. We've made good progress. When I started this process, there were only 13 LEPCs that were active in the state. We now have 53 active LEPCs, and we're hoping to have all 92 of our counties active and up and running and to be approved by the State Emergency Response Commission. This is good planning. It's good preparation. It's volunteers doing the work, doing it at the local level, and with state oversight and coordination so that we're all working together. And I would ask for your support on the committee amendment and then the bill. Thank you very much.

SENATOR CROSBY: Thank you, Senator Preister. Senator Beutler, on the committee amendment.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Senator Crosby and members of the Legislature, I may be the only one not supporting the committee amendment, but I would like to say why so that people understand what I think is happening and why I don't particularly want to be a part of it. But when you come to the general area of pollution, damage to the environment, all of these different kinds of things that can happen, there are one of two ways, I suppose there are more than two ways, but, generally, one of two ways you can pay for it. You can say to the people who create the